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DE RUEHLM #0038/01 0091221
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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5087
INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0108
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 9759
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 6697
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 4763
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3432
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0447
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 3524
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM PRIORITY 0511
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2604
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 7261
RUEHB/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5025
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1672
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 000038

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/09/2016

TAGS: PTER PGOV MOPS PREL CE

SUBJECT: SRI LANKAN SECURITY FORCES CAPTURE KEY TIGER BASE
IN EAST; RAID LTTE-AFFILIATED NGO

REF: COLOMBO 0030 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: AMBASSADOR ROBERT O. BLAKE JR. FOR REASONS: 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) security forces captured the Tamil Tigers' (LTTE) main military camp in the eastern district of Ampara on January 7, where they reportedly uncovered an explosive-laden truck and three motorbikes fitted with explosive detonators. The military alleged a Dutch non-governmental organization (NGO) had operated a hospital within the camp. Meanwhile, the LTTE-affiliated international NGO the Tamils Relief Organization (TRO) reported that paramilitary cadres "with the Sri Lanka Army" raided its Trincomalee and Vavuniya offices between January 5-7, stripping the offices of computer and electronic equipment, burning documents and assaulting a security guard. On January 8, a police Criminal Investigations Department (CID) unit raided the TRO's Colombo Office. These nearly simultaneous attacks on TRO offices by paramilitaries and security forces are another strong indication that government security forces are working hand-in-hand with anti-LTTE paramilitaries in the east. End summary.

200-Cadre Camp Captured

¶2. (C) Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) security forces captured the Tamil Tigers' (LTTE) main military camp in the eastern district of Ampara on January 7, according to military spokesman Brigadier Prasad Samarasinghe. The military claimed that the camp had housed a number of child soldiers and included a hospital "built by a non-governmental organization" (NGO). Surviving Tiger cadres retreated from the so-called "Stanley Base" in Kanjikudichcharu, Ampara after a battle leaving behind ammunition, antipersonnel mines and rations, according to GSL reports. Police Special Task Force (STF) units also uncovered an explosive-packed truck

and three motorcycles fitted with explosive devices in the camp.

NGO Blamed

13. (C) The independent (but strongly nationalist) Island newspaper alleged that the Dutch NGO ZOA (Southeast Asia) Refugee Care Netherlands had built the hospital. However, it also quoted ZOA Country Director Bernard Jaspers Fayer as denying that the NGO had built a hospital for the LTTE. Fayer added that ZOA had suspended operations in its Ampara office, seven kilometers from the Tiger base, on August 4, 2006 due to security concerns.

14. (C) ZOA Akkaraipattu program manager C. Elangovan told Pol FSN on January 9: "We had been working in a village in Thirukovil, Ampara (near the LTTE's 'Stanley Base') but stopped work there on August 4. The (GSL) Security Task Force (STF) has now taken control of the entire area. There was one nursing home run by the LTTE while we worked in the area. It was housed in a building next-door to a pre-school called the Thangavelayuthapuram Maha Vidhyala with which ZOA had been working for a period of time. ZOA has never given assistance to the LTTE or a hospital run by the LTTE." The program manager added: "Unfortunately, this is a way of linking all NGOs to the LTTE."

TRO Offices Raided, Looted

15. (C) According to a January 8 press release from Arjunan
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Ethirveerasingham, local press officer of the LTTE-affiliated international NGO the Tamils Relief Organization (TRO) in Sri Lanka (and an AmCit), paramilitary cadres raided the Trincomalee and Vavuniya offices of the TRO repeatedly between January 5-6, stripping the offices of computer and electronic equipment, burning documents and assaulting a security guard. Arjuna told pol FSN on January 9 that on January 7, "Karuna cadres and Sri Lanka Army (SLA) soldiers" returned to the Trincomalee office, removing a van, furniture, and relief materials such as portable stoves, tents and candles. On the morning of January 9, he told us, armed Karuna cadres and SLA soldiers took control of the TRO office in Trincomalee.

16. (C) On January 8, a police Criminal Investigations Department (CID) unit raided "without a warrant" the TRO's Colombo office, according to a TRO press release and a Tamilnet report. Arjuna told pol FSN on January 9 that the raiders spoke in both Tamil and Sinhalese. A January 6 article on the pro-LTTE Tamilnet website reported that police had called six male TRO employees from Vavuniya and Trincomalee in for questioning. Tamilnet also alleged that police had photographed TRO personnel and vehicles during the raids. Paramilitary cadres believed to be working with the Sri Lanka Army (SLA) had previously targeted TRO offices in Jaffna and the east in 2006.

17. (C) COMMENT: The government's allegation against the Dutch NGO ZOA comes in the context of a recent government-orchestrated media campaign against NGOs working in Tamil areas. UN observers and ceasefire monitors have previously brought up evidence that elements of the GSL security forces paramilitaries are working with the shadowy paramilitaries. The near-simultaneity of the raids by paramilitary cadres on TRO offices in the east with the police raid on the TRO's Colombo office on Monday is another strong indication of the working relationship between Sri Lankan security forces and anti-LTTE paramilitaries, especially the "Karuna group," official denials notwithstanding.

BLAKE